



CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY ON STUDENTS SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN KENYAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

Modern technology has hit the world with a bug and Kenya has not been spared. Modern technology devices and applications use has gone up tremendously in last ten years with the adoption by both the young and the old growing day by day. People have incorporated technology in the way they communicate, entertain, learn and even how they socially relate with one another. Such a massive technology has brought with it challenges and opportunities. This study was aimed at critically analyzing impacts of the modern technology on the students' social relationship in Kenyan schools. The researchers therefore sought to critically analyze the use of modern technology, the attitude of the students towards modern technology and the pros and cons of modern technology on students' social relationships in Kenyan schools. The methodology used was qualitative in nature. The study also employed critical analysis design which was non-interactive, where the researchers analyzed critically the available literature to back up the methodology. The finding of the study may be of great importance to all students since they may be made aware of how modern technology impacts on their social relationships. The study concluded that technology needs to be backed by face-to-face interaction in order to establish and maintain strong and meaningful social relationships. The study had the following recommendations: That students should strike a balance between times spend interacting with technology and face-to-face interactions with friends and families. Teachers should provide opportunities that allow more interactions among students on face-to-face basis in order to encourage development of social and communication skills. The ministry of education in Kenya to

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introduce or incorporate the teaching on proper use of technology in enhancing social relationships in the curriculum

Keywords: modern technology, students' social relationships, Facebook, WhatsApp, mobile phone, social media

1. Introduction

During the early years, technology was used as a tool of survival. However, this trend has today changed with technology becoming a means of communication and entertainment globally. Social media, Internet and cellphones play a very significant role in the lives of many people, this is evidenced by Huffington post (2016) quoting Nielson survey of 2014, conducted in USA indicating that an American averagely spends around 11 hours interacting on social media and that more than half of the 11 hours is spend interacting with smartphone and tablets.

Modern technology in Kenya has brought many advantages like ease access to information, creativity and innovation among others. However, technology has impacted negatively on social relationships and interactions. Communication using text and email lack context and ability to detect tone due to the inability to differentiate between sarcasm and reality on the side of sender. This may result to misunderstanding, assumption and miscommunication hence having an impact on how people view and relate with each other.

Technology in Kenya has also lead to electronic addiction, making many people lose touch with the physical world. Social media and email have taken the place of traditional interaction and discussions. This has led to social isolations. This study therefore addressed itself to the impacts of the modern technology on students' social relationships.

2. Statement of the Problem

Technology is the driving force of development today. It has reduced the world into a global village in which people can easily relate in terms of business, communication, and other social relationship. Kenya has not been left behind in embracing technology which has translated to the many developments that we experience today. However, technology in Kenya has not been used as intended more so in students' social relationships. Students spend most of their time associating with each other through technology at the expense of face- to - face interaction. If this trend continues we will have a generation of people who are anti-social and isolated in their lives, hence this

study was intended to critically analyze the pros and cons of modern technology on the lives of students in Kenyans schools in terms of their day to day social relationships.

3. Purpose of the Study

Main purpose of the study was to critically analyze the impacts of modern technology on students' social relationships in Kenyan schools.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To critically analyze the impact of the uses of modern technology in students social relationships in Kenyan schools.
2. To critically analyze the impact of people's attitudes towards modern technology use in students social relationships in Kenyan schools.
3. To critically analyze the impact of the pros of modern technology on students social relationships in Kenyan schools.
4. To critically analyze the impact of the cons of modern technology on students social relationships in Kenyan schools.

5. Research Questions

1. What is the impact of the uses of modern technology in students' social relationships in Kenyan schools?
2. What is the impact of people's attitudes towards modern technology use in students' social relationships in Kenyan schools?
3. What is the impact of the pros of modern technology on students' social relationships in Kenya?
4. What is the impact the cons of modern technology on students' social relationships in Kenya?

6. Research Methodology

The researchers used qualitative research method which was based on critical analysis research design. The method was used since the study was concerned with a qualitative aspect that is quality of students' social interaction. On the other hand analytical design was used because the study demanded analyzing of existing literature as the source of data, (McLeod, 2013). Using this method the researcher critically analyzed the impacts of

modern technology on students social relationships in schools in Kenya. The research method enabled the researchers to come up with recommendations on proper use of technology in enhancing students' social relationships.

7. Significance of the Study

Findings of the study may benefit students since they will be made aware of how modern technology impacts positively and negatively to establishing and maintaining of their social relationships. Teachers may also benefit from the study through knowing the different way in which students use technology, this will enable them to offer guidance and advice to the students on proper use of technology. The findings may benefit policy makers in formulating policies on proper use of technology so as to promote social interaction and relationships among students in Kenyan schools. The findings may be of benefit since they may add value to the existing body of knowledge.

8. Theoretical Framework

8.1 Gratification theory

The study was based on the Uses and gratification theory that was formulated by Elihu Katz in 1974. Katz viewed media users as being actively engaged with the content of the media in order to meet their needs and gratification. He put the needs and gratification into five groups as follows: Cognitive wants, Affective wants, personal needs, Social needs and Tension free needs.

8.1.1 Cognitive wants

According to the theory, some media users have intellectual needs hence they use media to acquire knowledge and information in order to satisfy this needs by searching the internet for any topic of interest.

8.1.2 Affective wants

Constantly individuals will engage with media in order to meet their attitudes, emotional and pleasure needs.

8.1.3 Personal needs

People will engage with the media in order to compare themselves with others of the same status, assess their stability and credibility within the society thus feeling happy with them.

8.1.4 Social needs

This involves the need to relate, interact and socialize with friends and family members within a given society. Today People interact through social networking site like Facebook and WhatsApp among others in order to meet social needs.

8.1.5 Tension free needs

The theory says that sometimes people may use media as a way of escaping from reality or stressing situations and also to relieve themselves from tension.

8.1.6 Assumption of the theory

The theory assumes that media audience is conceived as actively involved with the media and their use of the media is aimed at meeting a given goal. The decision to link a particular need gratification to a given media lies on the hands of the individual media users since they are always aware of their motives, choices and interests in the said media and are able to explain them verbally when required to. The theory also assumes that there is always a competition for satisfaction of the needs between media and other resources and therefore the value of a given media content can only be judged by the audience or media user after comparing it with other related content from the other Resources. The researchers therefore based this study on this theory in order to analyze the impacts of how students use technology on their social relationships.

8.2 Vygotsky's social interaction theory

The study was also guided by Vygotsky's social interaction theory which was formulated by Lev Vygotsky who lived between 1896 and 1938. The theory stressed on the role played by social interaction in the social, cultural and cognitive development of a child/student.

Vygotsky believed that the full development of a student's Zone of proximal development depended on his/her full social interaction with the capable and knowledgeable peers and adults. To him the Zone of proximal development was the level at which the learner found it easier to acquire a difficult skill or knowledge under the collaboration, guidance and the encouragement of a more capable peer. The newly acquire skill or knowledge then becomes part of the student's own independent achievement and a stepping stone to future achievements.

He also stressed that social interaction among students creates a community of learners in which they share discourse and knowledge. This is done through face-to-face discussions, print or electronic mails. With time, the members of the community

share and adopt a common knowledge, behaviour, language and beliefs. Ideas and concepts continue flowing among the community members with some being adopted for future references and others rejected, hence the researchers pegged their study on this theory in order to effectively analysis the impacts that modern technology have on the students social interactions in Kenyan schools.

9. Critique Literature Review

9.1 Critical Analysis of the Impact of the Uses of Modern Technology in Students Social Relationships in Kenyan Schools

Technological advancement has resulted to its wide spread use in different aspects of people's daily life. Among the areas in which of technology has played a key role is the day to day interaction and relationships of students in which technology is used in a variety of way among them being:

9.1.1 Interconnectedness

Today students have been carried away by demands of academic work and responsibilities assigned by teachers and parents to the extent that they have no time to connect face to face with others in order to establish social relations. Technology therefore comes in to bridge this gap by helping students to connect and meet others. Using the technology of mobile apps and social networks, one can connect with both new and old relationships at the comfort of their houses.

Social Medias have also been used to eliminate the social, geographical and hierarchical distance between students in that students can reach and connect with each other in real time. Mobile phone has brought about a social change in which students can easily stay in touch with friends and relatives even those far away. Students can create social groups through social media like Facebook and WhatsApp where they easily find acceptance among those with common interest, hobbies or like-minded. Such group offers a sense of belonging and a chance of self-expression that is not as restrictive as face-to-face interaction where issues of acceptance and negative stereotype may crop up.

9.1.2 Communication

In the past communication in Kenya was mainly through letter writing which took long time to be delivered through the post office services. With modern technology Today, students communication has become easier thanks to emails, texting through mobile

devices and chatting through social networking sites where one can draft a message and sent it to a recipient who is able to receive, read and reply it instantly.

9.1.3 Entertainment

Modern technology device have become a source of entertainment. Students are now able to listen to music, play games, watch videos and surf the internet using different technological devices like mobile phones, laptops, iPad, televisions and computers creating avenues of students to interact as they are being entertained.

9.1.4 Babysitting

When students are busy at home with Homework, assignments and other responsibilities assigned to them by parent, they tend to keep the little siblings busy by allowing them to play with their mobile phones, iPad, or iPhone or watching their favorite programs like cartoons or playing games in the computer or play stations to avoid their disturbances and distractions. Also toddlers having temper tantrums are often given mobile phones to cool them down.

9.1.5 Coordination of social activities and events

Students engaged in many social events outside the normal academic work. These events my include games and sports, clubs, music and drama. They use technology like Google calendar and social media to plain, co-ordinate, and schedule and remind each other about the date, time and venue even when they are at home during holidays. This allows for smooth running of all the functions in their institution of learning.

9.1.6 Collaboration learning and studying

Technology has opened new ways of collaboration in learning where students are able to share and annotate notes with study- group members, access the notes anytime, anywhere and from any device, add comments and be in track with any changes using tools based on the clouds like Google drive and Evernote. Google drive and Evernote also allows students collaborate in writing and presentation of projects where students are able to make their contributions in coming up with one common document. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites help students connect with their learning communities and experts, where they hold meaningful conversation regardless of time and geographical distances, this broadens the learning environment

9.2 Critical Analysis of the Impact Of Peoples` Attitude towards Modern Technology Use In Students Social Relationships in Kenya Schools

9.2.1 Attitude of the youth

The attitude of youth towards the use of modern technology is positive in that they view it as a useful tool in their daily life. However, their level of attitudes and pattern of use are determined by the level of confidence, computer experience and exposure. The parents' attitude towards technology and the kind of encouragement they gave the youth during their early years also have an impact on the attitude they have on technology use. Peer and social influences also have a strong influence on the youth's use of technology as they argue that modern technology keeps them connected to friends and relatives all over the world. They also say that technology especially internet offers them a chance to access information especially in education and the emerging issues.

9.2.2 Attitude of the old

The older people have significantly increased their usage of modern technology in their day to day lives both at professional and personal levels. This has been witnessed mainly in the use of simple models of mobile phones of texting and calling. However majority of them are not comfortable with the use of complicate devices and applications like smartphones, computer, twitter, Facebook and email. This calls for proactive measures to be taken in order to bridge the digital gap between the young and the old.

The older people have selective tendency on how to use technology leading to stereotypical view that they have negative attitude. While the young can use technology for socialization, entertainment, self fulfilment and relaxing, the older prefer the traditional way of meeting the needs like watching television, visiting friends or reading a story book. Many older people have a belief that they are too old to learn computer even before making an attempt to learn it. This negative self-belief affects how they learn and use modern technology devices.

9.3 Critical Analysis of the Impact of the Pros of Modern Technology on Students Social Relationships in Kenyan Schools

The use of technology in social relationships has had advantages like:

9.3.1 Development of relationships

Technology acts as the meeting arena for people. Through technology a student is able to establish social relationships with new friends whom they have common hobbies, interests and beliefs. According to Hertlein & Ancheta, (2014), such interaction can lead to “flirting” and this initial interaction online is more open, honest and students will have an overall positive view of the others void of non-verbal communication influences.

9.3.2 Emotional support

For the students in higher institution of learning and may be married or in intimate relationship, technology comes handy to provide opportunity for accessibility to each other in case of emergency, on stressing moments in order to offer each other reassurance and emotional soothing. When separated by academic work and other social functions the spouses are in a position to send love messages and keep in touch throughout the day.

9.3.3 Relationship management

Establishing, maintaining and managing a relationship is not an easy thing. It requires dedication, knowledge and skills. Technology offers the opportunity for student to seek online information, suggestions and tips on how to be in successful relationships. According to Hertlin *et al.* (2014), technology offers the best way of resolving and managing conflicts in a relationship since it gives people room to express themselves without being mad or nervous at the other partner physical in front of them. Texting or e-mailing offers a slow moving conversation void of quick emotional responses thus, allow of rational discussion on the issue at hand.

9.3.4 Relationship enhancement

For those students and friends who are in long distance relationship technology acts as the only media through which the relationships are maintained. They Skype, text, e-mail and chat with each other making them feel closer to each other though physically apart. Modern technology devices and applications like fax machines, electronic mail, mobile phone, video conferencing and instant text messages have significantly simplified how we communicate and relate with others even those far.

9.3.5 Better communication

Technology helps students to communicate with friends and family members, sharing information, photos, and special events even when physically apart. The frequency and

quality of communication among students has increased. When students have easy access to friends and relatives, they feel more connected and strongly supported leading to feeling of togetherness and happiness. Texting comes in handy when you need to keep in touch but calling is not possible as per the situation. For example, in public place where you don't want others to hear you conversation, texting becomes of great help.

At the critical moment of joining college, social network plays a critical role in the successful transition from home to college. The new student may result to social interaction to find a sense of belonging and connectedness to the rest. This is most useful to students who face challenges in face-to-face interaction because they are introverts or the shy.

9.4 Critical Analysis of the Impact of the Cons of Modern Technology on Students Social Relationships in Kenya Schools

In as much as modern technology is good, it also has it negative effects on how students relate. The negative effects include:

9.4.1 Social divisions

Technology is advancing and changing with new technological devices and application being manufactured on daily bases. To be at per with these new trends only a student from the upper class can afford. This locks out those from middle and the lower class, hence having a negative impact on how the students relate and interact. This leads to a major social division which if not check is carried over to the students' life after school.

9.4.2 Etiquette

Since the second party is not physically present to display their emotional reactions in electronic communications, students tend to tell lies and say things that they cannot say in face- to-face communication. On this Dellner (2011) argues that, when communicating electronically, students behave as if the part that has feelings for others in the nervous system has been paralyzed.

Students use phones in loud and annoying manner in public, it is not a new thing to hear a phone ring in the middle of a meeting, or in class or in the library where students are busy. Some will not even excuse themselves but go ahead to pick the call in the presence of all the others in the class or meeting. This behavior is annoying and distracts the attention of others.

9.4.3 Weaker social ties

The ease to electronic communication has led to weakness of the social ties that traditionally existed as a result of face-to-face communication with other people. Today internet offers a chance for establishing and sustaining friendship, romantic attachment and engagement in social based discussion and other social interactions from the comfort of ones sitting room, hence less reason to leave home for actual face- to- face interaction. In this way internet has reduced the chance of face-to-face communication which was of high quality and contributed to satisfaction and wellbeing in a social relation.

9.4.4 Family ties

Our total embrace of internet, mobile phones and social media has caused a massive shift in behaviour among family members. These days it is common to see family members sitting next to each other but totally neglecting and ignoring each other thanks to technology. Older family members are each occupied with their phones, either chatting, texting, e-mailing or playing games. No communication takes place in the house so long as Dad is watching news or there is an interesting movie that Mum is watching.

Parents are also totally obsessed with technology with minimal or no attention to the children. They only turn to the children after they have finished responding to all the E-mails and text messages. According to Dellner (2011), our ability to communicate and have face-to-face communication has been eroded by use of mobile phones. Phones have reduced conversation in the family to an extent that family members text each other from different rooms in the same house. Technology has made it hard of parents to spare time for their children while at home on holidays or during weekends. This has resulted to weak parent-children bond.

9.4.5 Stress

Having a cell phone tempts a student to spend almost a whole day talking and texting instead of doing constructive things. They keep their phones nearby even at night ready to respond to calls and messages due to the pressure to remain reachable round the clock. This led to sleepless night or interrupted and disrupted sleep making them irritable and stressed. A stressed student is unable to concentrate in class or even establish and maintain any meaningful social relationship.

Frequent use of cellphone increases stress level. This is because having a cell phone means you are always available to take calls, reply messages and emails. Students are always under pressure to respond to each incoming message, they spend

so much time staring at the screen as they expect constant update and reply from friends, this create anxiety and even depression if they don't get the reply quickly. The constant ring and vibration alert can keep the cellphone user on edge leading to "phantom vibration" a condition in which one thinks the phone is ringing even when it is not, (Leonard, 2015, par.3).

9.4.6 Addiction

The continuous use of technology especially mobile phone is addictive. According Leonard (2015), Dopamine and serotonin chemicals, that give drug users a feeling of their "high" hit the brain when our phone rings, leading to a feeling of happiness. If this continues, it leads to addiction which just like other addictive substance is not ease to withdraw. A study done in USA in 2011 called "The word is unplugged" required university students to avoid their cellphone, laptops, and social networking for 24-hours. During the withdrawal period results indicated that a big number of the students under study suffered from some significance mental and physical distress, pain, confusion and extreme isolation, (Leonard, 2015).

9.4.7 Isolation

Intimacy in Social relationships is declining as students become more involved in technologically based communication and forgetting the traditional face- to- face communication. The current generation of students is moving around with earphones in their ears, they sit in public places by themselves, connected to the internet and communicating to online friends, but never to the person seated next to them. Dellner, (2011) notes that students are continuously becoming isolated as they interact through technology.

According to Dellner (2011) Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Myspace, email and blog among others are electronic drugs that have yanked the youths of today away from physical word. In our educational institutions, the youth cannot engage in any meaningful academic group discussion or any other social interaction since each is busy interacting with friends online and totally isolated from the physical friends. Too much electronic relating results to a sense of social isolation.

Technology has also had its effects in a family setup affecting how couples relate to each other. In the initial stages of establishing a relationship, people tend to communicate a lot through texting. Some are tempted to say things that are not true and showing the wrong personality about themselves in order to impress the other party. On getting intimate and finally getting married, the other party comes to

discover the real personality. This is damaging to the partners personality and causes impaired trust among the couples.

Technology also affects or interferes with intimacy process in that couples tend to hide behind technology in order to avoid discussing issues affecting their relation, (Hertlin *et al.* 2014). This hiding behind technology makes one partners feel excluded from the others life. This results to a perceived neglect and jealousy.

Continuous use of texting in communication at the expense of face-to-face for couples can easily led to misunderstanding since message lack clarity with regard to the intention because you cannot read facial and body language since the other party is not physical present to clarify. This allows for misinterpretation and ambiguity. Hertlin *et al.* (2014) says that texting may lead to misunderstanding since you cannot see the facial or read the emotional expressions of the other party. Things said through technology often leave the receiver confused and not understanding the feeling of the other person.

Mistrust also arises when a partner is constantly distracted by technology through calls and messages and has to move away in order to answer or reply. This leads to feeling of jealousy and insecure. Having friends of opposite sex on social media is tempting for one to engage in sexting. This leads to infidelity, (Hertlin *et al.* 2014). As a result of mistrust among couples, if ones computer or phone is left accessible, the other partner engages in investigating behavior leading to discovery of infidelity activities that may lead to unstable relationship leading to divorce. Lumpkin (2012) states that 33% of divorce case in the USA in 2011 mentioned Facebook messages as one of the major of disagreement.

10. Conclusions

The arrival of modern technology has been like storm in Kenya. It has been an amazing period of transition between the traditional and modern ways of interaction and its capacity is gradually becoming a lifestyle of choice. It has for sure changed the way people communicate and relate with colleagues, friends and relatives. However, every technology that provides benefits also has consequences. The negative impact of technology to the youth and the society in general cannot be ignored. It ranges from weakening social ties, social division, isolation, stress and breakages in social relationships. Therefore although technology is good, if abused it can be harmful, hence the need to consider when to use it, how to use it, what to use it for and make sure you benefit maximally from the technology you are using.

11. Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following.

1. All the students using technology should try to strike a balance between the times spend interacting with technology and time spend socializing with friends and family members.
2. Teachers in educational institutions to provide opportunities that will offer a chance for more interaction among students on face-to-face basis in order to encourage development of social and communication skills.
3. The government through the ministry of education to introduce or incorporate the teaching of proper use of modern technology devices in the curriculum.

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